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SIPDIS

FOR ROMANIA DESK OFFICER

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SUBJECT: DEMARCHE RESPONSE - ROMANIA CONCERNED WITH RUSSIAN
INTENTIONS AS EU MINISTERS MEET

REF: SECSTATE 93264

Classified By: DCM JERI GUTHRIE-CORN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (U) Poloff delivered reftel talking points and non-paper on Georgia to Daniel Ionita, Director of NATO/Security Affairs at Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on September 4, 2008.

¶2. (C) Ionita emphasized the need for a unified EU approach to dealing with Russia in the region. He said that Putin had signaled Russian actions in Georgia earlier in the year, expressing Russian unhappiness with Georgia and the Ukraine (the latter reference to Crimea). As a result, Romania could not let its guard down. "We're very concerned that in a worst-case scenario, conflict in Georgia could have a spillover effect." Ionita said. "For the time being, we're taking it seriously."

¶3. (C) When asked whether the worst-case scenario was based merely on the Georgia model, or on some specific Russian statement or action in the region, Ionita responded that he was not aware of any specific threat from Russia toward Romania or Moldova based on the situation in Georgia or the frozen conflict in Transnistria. "Each and every case is different. There's more than one model," Ionita said, cautioning that the Russians would not necessarily use the Georgian formula elsewhere in the region. "They may use different leverages to obtain their goals. In Transnistria, for example, they could intimidate the Moldovan authorities. We don't know if they're doing that yet, but they've showed the world they're back in business as a military power and not at all shy about intervening."

¶4. (C) The EU approach toward Russia must not only be unified, but also balanced, Ionita continued. "On the one hand, we need to stay united and convey a strong message to Russia saying in effect that Russia is part of this conflict, not some external actor. On the other hand, we need to maintain links and use cooperative mechanisms with Russia. We need to constructively engage Russia." Of more immediate concern was Russia's ability to capitalize on division within the EU and NATO. While Romania was pleased with NATO statements concerning the crisis, Ionita said, the EU still "does not have a common outlook. But we do have that common denominator in NATO. We also have shared principles and values."

¶5. (C) Comment: While concerned, our interlocutor did not suggest Romania felt threatened or intimidated by statements emanating from Moscow, such as President Medvedev's widely-quoted August 25 warning to Moldovan President Voronin not to repeat Georgia's "mistake" of using force to seize control of a breakaway region, or Foreign Minister Lavrov's August 26 remark that all parties involved in the

Transnistria dispute were ready to return to the 2003 Kozak plan. Based on the conversation above, it appears at this juncture that Ionita and his MFA colleagues are interpreting Russia's remarks as rhetoric rather than as a signal of impending action.

TAUBMAN